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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR IO, NEA/ELA AND NEA/IPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2018

TAGS: PREL SCUL UNESCO JO IS KWBG

SUBJECT: JORDANIAN FM CONVENES P5 AMBASSADORS ON HARAM AL-SHARIF/TEMPLE MOUNT CONCERNs

REF: A. AMMAN 2147

¶B. AMMAN 1998

¶C. AMMAN 1483

¶D. AMMAN 536

¶E. AMMAN 394

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft,  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Foreign Minister Salah Al-Bashir, in a meeting convoked with less than a day's notice on August 21, convened the P5 Ambassadors in his office to convey Jordan's great concern that Israel was preparing - within the next month - to take unilateral steps to begin construction of a new ascent to the Mughrabi Gate entrance to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Ambassador Beecroft attended, as did the Ambassadors from the United Kingdom and China, and the Charges D'Affaires from Russia and France.

¶2. (C) Bashir gave a rundown of the history of the Mughrabi Gate Ascent and Jordan's equities (see reftels for details) and complained that Israel continues to ignore Jordan and has been circumventing the UNESCO process governing the design and implementation of plans for a new ascent. Jordan believes Israel will upset the status quo at the site by expanding the prayer area for Jewish women at the Western Wall (which abuts the ascent) and also by widening the ramp itself. The Foreign Minister, insisting that Jordan rejects all Israeli unilateral measures, voiced concern that if Israel goes forward, it could create unrest among both Palestinians and Jordanians. It could also affect both Israeli and Palestinian internal politics adversely and impede efforts to reach a just and lasting peace. He called on the P5 and the international community to take effective measures to urge Israel to halt its "illegal practices." Note: Jordanian officials have raised similar concerns with Post throughout this year - and told A/S David Welch in February 2008 that the matter is "a bomb that will soon explode." (Ref E) End Note.

¶3. (C) Seeking further comment, PolOff attempted to reach MFA Policy Planner Omar Nahar, the MFA's pointman on the issue. His secretary said he was tied up in meetings on the Mughrabi Gate issue "with all the other Embassies in Amman." Separately, in a conversation with PolOff on August 18, Israeli PolCouns Itai Bardov had briefly raised the issue himself, voicing exasperation that the Arabs would draw the conclusion that Israel seeks to control the Haram al-Sharif.

Visit Amman's Classified Web Site at  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman/>  
Beecroft